Prevent garden pests now

By DIANE RELF
Extension Specialist

Even before the first pests appear, there are things you can do to prevent them from devouring your garden. Your first two lines of defense are proper soil preparation and plant selection.

Maintain a slightly acid soil (around pH 6.5). If in doubt, have a soil analysis made through your local Extension office. The appropriate pH allows vegetable plants to have access to all the necessary soil nutrients and provides a suitable environment for the microorganisms that are essential for balanced soil nutrients. Healthy, rapidly growing plants are less susceptible to pest problems.

Fall tillage exposes those pests which live near the surface of the soil to the weather and their natural enemies, as well as destroying the insects in crop residues. If you did not till in the fall, however, do so early enough in the spring to give the remaining vegetation time to decompose before planting time.

When diseased plant material is added to compost for use on your garden, delay using the compost until all has decayed beyond recognition. Active compost piles should be hot (140 F) to kill disease organisms, insect eggs and weed seeds.

If you use manure and compost, be sure they are worked well into the soil. Otherwise, millipedes, white grubs and other pests may be encouraged. If these insects are a problem, it probably means you are using too much compost. Consider other means of adding organic matter, such as cover cropping.

Follow recommended fertilizer practices. Supplement chemical fertilizers with organic matter or compost to help assure that all trace elements and major nutrients are available. "Feed" the soil, not just the plants, and you will provide an appropriate environment for all soil life that will result in healthier plants.

Careful plant selection also reduces pest problems and plant crops that are suited to the soil and climate.

If you do plant vegetables or fruits that are not normally grown in your area, try and provide the best conditions. For example, watermelon prefers a light, warm, well-drained soil, so don't try to plant in heavy clay without first adding copious amounts of compost or other soil-lightening material, and allow the soil to warm up before seeding or setting plants out.

Use disease-free, certified seed if available, and select disease-resistant vegetable and fruit varieties.

Select plants that are sturdy and have well-developed root systems. Diseases and insects in young seedlings may start in greenhouses or plant beds and cause heavy losses in the garden. Buy plants from a reputable grower who can assure you that they are disease- and insect-free or grow your own from seed.

By practicing these preventative measures, you can at least delay the onset of pests and reduce their impact to manageable levels.

Use the garden to celebrate holidays

Some people garden, not for economic or aesthetic reasons, but rather as a celebration of life. What better way to do this than to grow a garden designed for celebrating our traditional holidays?

Corn-on-the-cob is an American tradition for Fourth of July picnics. Some gardeners like the challenge of being able to harvest right in their back yards. In most parts of Virginia this requires some real planning and prepartation.

The soil should be prepared during the previous fall so it is ready for an early start. Clear plastic can be applied to the rows to warm the soil faster, giving a head start of several days to a week.

Some people have started their corn indoors and transplanted it, but I think that may be a bit extreme. Pre-germination can speed the harvest by a day or two, however, if July 6 is not as acceptable as July 4 for the year's crop.

Labor Day is an ideal time for garden harvest picnics and most garden crops are available for this celebration.

Halloween definitely demands pumpkins and there are a number of varieties you might consider. Big max and big moon will produce pumpkins big enough for Cinderella's carriage, but they require an enormous amount of garden space. Jack o'lantern and spookie have medium and small-sized fruit, respectively. For those with smaller gardens, spirit provides a medium-sized fruit on a bush plant.

Thanksgiving brings to mind the herb garden with sage, thyme, oregano and mints to season the feast. Your landscape's plants also can produce the table centerpiece and other decorative elements. Unless there has been an unusually severe freeze, some of the late chrysanthemum varieties still will be lovely.

In the mountains, it is wise to plant early and mid-season varieties for most of your outdoor color; but experiment with a few late bloomers in a sheltered location for Thanksgiving decorations.

Easy-to-make holiday decorations include grapevine wreaths and dried flower arrangements. Annual flowers that can be grown easily and be collected all summer for fall use include strawflowers, celosia, amaranth, blue salvia and many ornamental grasses.

I like to grow a miniature popcorn called Tom Thumb. Its three-inch ears are ideal for many decorative purposes. The ears are allowed to mature on the plant before use.

Useful perennials in late fall include yarrow, artemesia and lavendar.

As Christmas approaches, we look at other landscape plants for help in our celebrations. Magnolia leaves, fresh or treated in glycerine, can be the basis for many wreaths and arrangements. A few pines in the landscape will provide both cones and greenery.

Hollies are traditional but, as you select one to grow, remember that male and female flowers are on separate plants and both are required for colorful fruit. Also, hollies do not produce the display of fruit that we associate with English holly, so it is best to consider these plants carefully.

Valentine's and Mother's days make us think of warm loving cards with paper lace and flowers. Grow a few easily pressed flowers this year so that you can prepare your own cards next year. Good ones to grow include pansies, johnny-jump-ups, ranaunculous, single flowered dianthus and similar thin, non-fleshy flowers that will dry rapidly.

If you add a few plants to this year's gardening plans for use throughout the holiday year, you will get increased satisfaction from both your garden efforts and your celebrations of the special days.

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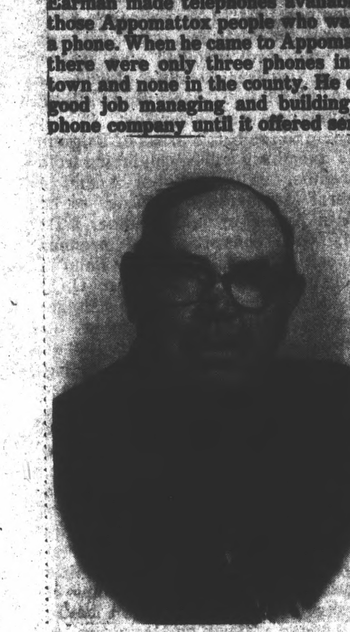
Electricity's arrival had 'light' moments

By FRANCES ABBITT

When Martin L. Earman and his wife moved to Appomattox County in 1908 and bought The Keys Place, a 140-acre farm near Vera for $550.00, he got busy and before long everybody in Appomattox was glad he was here.

Through hardwork and know-how, Earman made telephones available to those Appomattox people who wanted a phone. When he came to Appomattox there were only three phones in the town and none in the county. He did a good job managing and building the phone company until it offered service to all the town people and to those people out in the county as well. He sold the phone company in 1920 to Herbert C. Pulliam. However, Earman didn't let any grass grow under his feet, so to speak. He had other irons in the fire.



Martin L. Earman

In 1913 the Earmans built a home which is owned today by C. Lewis Dearmon. It was a beautiful home and cost $1,600.00 to complete.

Always mechanically inclined and interested in engines and the like, Earman built a small shop in the backyard of his home. This little shop housed a second-hand 15-horse-power motor which generated power for electric lights in Appomattox. At the time, acetylene lights were in use but were later converted to electricity.

So many people wanted electric lights that the requests for installations could not be handled by the small motor. The next year a 25-horsepower motor was installed. The following year the Appomattox Light and Power Company was organized. A new, larger building was erected on the lot below Mr. Earman's home and steam unit installed with a 50-100 horsepower capacity. The new plant and equipment cost approximately $17,000.

According to Mrs. Rachel Lawson, who provided the facts for this article, even the new larger system would "break down when the Appomattox County Fair was in progress."

When Earman began providing electric lights for the town the cost was $1.00 per bulb, per month. If a homeowner had a five-room house and one light in each room the cost would be $5.00. Many of the homeowners did not have their entire house wired, just a room or two and in some instances used drop cords" according to Mrs. Lawson's notes.

"In those early days of electricity in Appomattox, electrical power was only available from 6 p.m. until midnight.

"How well do I remember when the lights would blink three times as a reminder to the partons that only 15 minutes of 'electric light' was available. This gave the citizens time to close shop or prepare for bed," Mrs. Lawson said. Kerosene lights or candles were used when the power was turned off for the night.

In conjunction with the plant to generate electricity, Earman opened an ice plant. The combination light and ice plant burned (no one seems to know the year) and a new, larger plant was built on the street near where Appomattox Oil Company is now located. The new facility was constructed for approximately $30,000. Walter M. Hancock and Earman were the principle stockholders.

Mrs. Lawson recounted several amusing incidents relating to Earman's work as an electrician.

"He was wiring the rebuilt Appomattox Hotel after the original hotel had burned. The hotel was owned by Mr. and Mr. J. Hudson Cheatham. They were known to everybody who knew and loved them as "Miss Molly and "Uncle Hut" and one day after the wiring was done Miss Molly called Mr. Earman and asked him to get to the hotel as quickly as possible," Mrs. Lawson said.

"In some peculiar way, the plumbing and electrical wires had gotten crossed up and the entire hotel was 'electrified,' and the late Mrs. Flood (mother of the late Judge Flood) had been knocked off the commode seat. When Earman arrived "Miss Molly" had all the guests and servants in the hotel standing on the front lawn," said Mrs. Lawson.

Another amusing incident recalled by Mrs. Lawson had to do with the wiring of the Atwood home in Appomattox.

"Mr. Earman was installing the finest fixtures available at the request of Mrs. Atwood. Jake Wright, an employee of Earman, was working in the attic of the home and accidently fell through the ceiling of the master bedroom while Mrs. Atwood was taking a bath. Frightened and embarassed, she screamed for Earman, declaring that he would have to pay the damages and he would surely get a bill," recalled Mrs. Lawson.

"However, he didn't get a bill and he was glad because there was no insurance to cover property damage back in those days as we have today," Mrs. Lawson added.

The late Martin Earman, affectionately known as "Dooley", hardworking, talented, without a doubt, made Appomattox a better place in which to live. Earman....a name to be remembered.

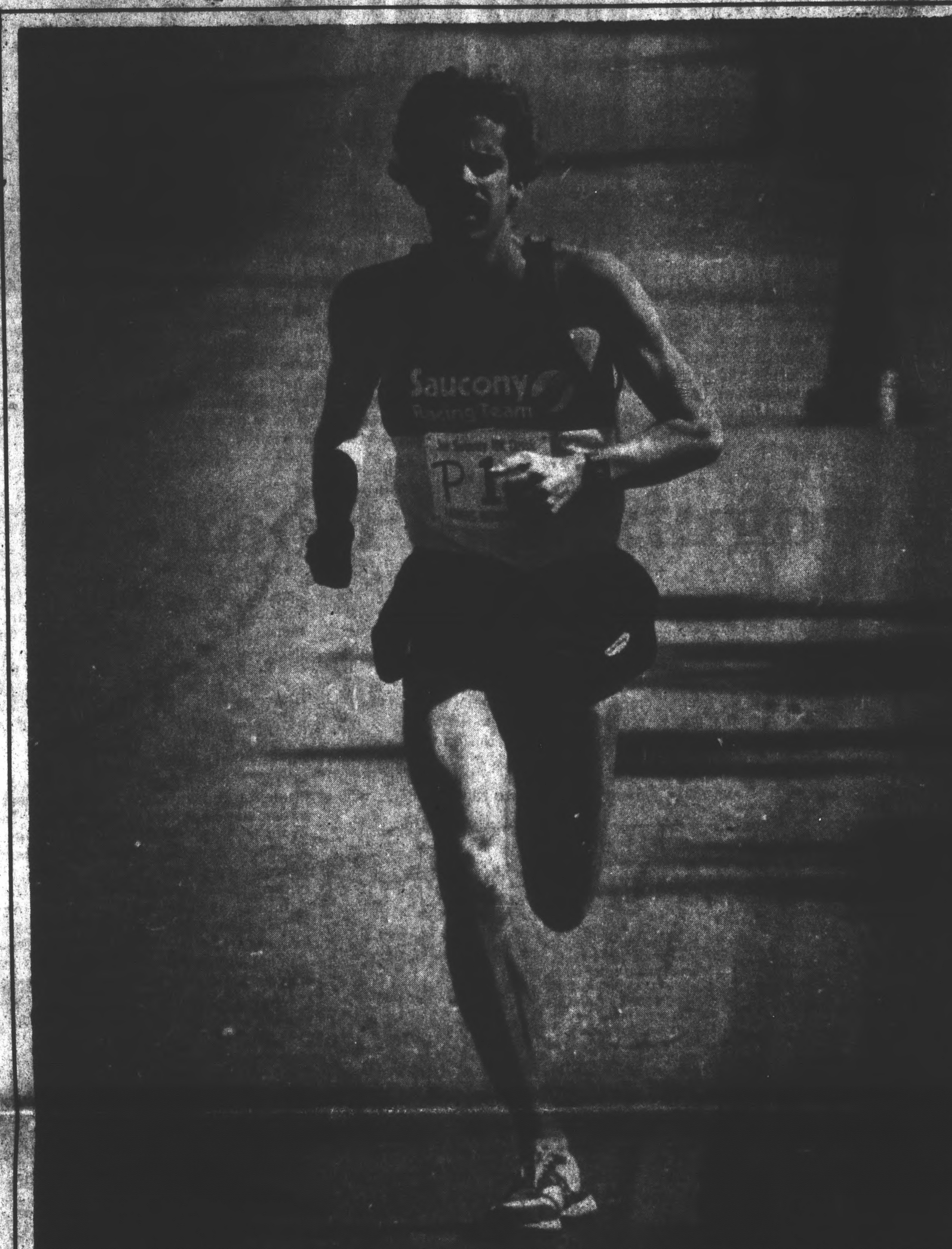
Daniel to speak at service

Congressman Dan Daniel will be featured speaker at Memorial Day services here on May 27, according to Dennis Gragg, commander of Post 104, American Legion.

Gragg also said the program would include an appearence by the Appomattox County High School Band and other features.

The program, honoring those Appomattox County citizens who have given their lives in the service of our country, will take place on the Courthouse square adjacent to the Eternal Flame beginning at 2:30 p.m.

Daniel, before being elected to Congress, was the national commander of the American Legion and is one of our most distinguished Virginians. Gragg commented "We are highly honored to have Dan Daniel accept our invitation and confidently expect a large turnout on May 27. We appreciate him joining with us in honoring those Appomattox patriots who made the supreme sacrifice on behalf of us all."



Ferguson Qualifies

APPOMATTOX NATIVE RICHARD FERGUSON, shown here competing in the Joe Sweeney 10K Classic, finished 15th in the Boston Marathon held on Monday, April 16. His time was two hours, 18 minutes and 10 seconds. Ferguson, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Mrs. Murrell Ferguson of Appomattox also qualified for the Olympic Trials to be held in Buffalo, New York in lateMay. A graduate of James Madison University, Ferguson is a graduate student at the University of Virginia, working toward a PhD in Psychology.

For 4-H trip

County clubs plan fundraiser

The Appomattox County 4-H Clubs are planning a 4-H Community Yard Sale, involving twenty families on Saturday, May 5 from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. The sale will take place in front of the Courtland Office Building (across from the Court House in Appomattox).

All proceeds from the sale will go to the 4-H Interstate Exchange Fund.

Twenty Appomattox 4-H'ers will be going to Bailey County, Texas, from July 27 through August 5 to live in homes of 4-H young people in that area of Texas that borders on Mexico. Appomattox 4-H'ers will be learning about Texas and the 4-H program there.

"The area where our 4-H'ers will be going, Bailey County, is semi-arid, with only about half the rainfall we have here," commented Frank Sweet, Appomattox County Extension Agent. "Corn, soybeans, cotton are grown in Bailey County. The area is flat with practically no trees," he added.

Appomattox County 4-H'ers will be available to local civic organizations to give talks about their experiences in Texas and about the 4-H work there.

"Hopefully we'll be able to finance the trip with the proceeds from this forthcoming sale and the other money-making projects the 4-H'ers have participated in this year," concluded Sweet.

Board to meet May 9

The Appomattox County School Board will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 9 at 3:30 p.m. in the library at Appomattox County High School.

Among the items on the agenda are the consideration of attendance poliocy for the 1984-85 session; report on results of minimum competency test results for 1983-84 session; report from English Department, Appomattox County High School,; consideration of regular summer school program; reports from individuals or representatives of organizations.

Parents and interested citizens are invited to attend.

Father Darkleaf

By CALVIN ROBINSON

The general Opinion is that Spring is here at long last. An awesome amount of yard and garden work was done over the week-end. And Azaleas! In full bloom on Court Street in front of the Funeral Home. And a lavish display on Annie Street. I have a modest Azalea Garden. Ah yes, and dogwood. Saw some lovely tulips on Church Street. And so it goes. Garden Week in Virginia and across The Commonwealth it is "open house" at many historic estates.

On my desk is a recent newspaper clipping stating that by the year 2,000 life expectancy for women in the United States will be 86.2 years and for men 74.3. That means that there will be lots of people around over 100 years old. What better place to spend all those years than Appomattox!

And a recent study says that children's favorite food is ice cream. Suits me, too, for I do away with ten pints a week. And the favorite vegetable? Corn on the cob! Followed by dill pickles and carrots.

On a quiet residential street, like Martha Street, headline happenings are scarce. So last Friday was quite a day. My back porch is enclosed and screened but nevertheless was the scene of violence. Two bumblebees, two honeybees and a hornet were victims of cold blooded murder. The weapon a fly swatter. The quilty party pled the 5th Amendment so as not to antagonize the relatives of the deceased. Voila.

Good place to meet and greet old friends....church. At St. Anne's Sunday morning was delighted to see Mrs. Jack Adams. The late Rev. Adams was minister of St. Anne's some years ago. Mrs. Adams now resides in Hampton.

Thursday, May 3, the annual meeting of the Women's Missionary Union will be held at Liberty Baptist Church, Appomattox. Should bring many guests to town. Welcome. This group includes churches of the Appomattox Baptist Association.

One of my favorite magazines is Arizona Highways. In the latest issue there is a feature about the Hohokam Indians. To them a covered courtyard, resting and eating place is called a Ramada. Lynchburg has a new Ramada Inn and doubtless the above explains the name.

Anyone from Appomattox headed for Lexington, Kentucky, this week-end? Kentucky Derby weekend. "The Run for the Roses!"

A letter from a reader in Lynchburg says the writer wishes to buy a copy of Featherston's History of Appomattox and "Appomattox County, Past Present, Future" by Vara Smith Stanley. I will forward any replies to said party. Especially interested in any record of Civil War soldier W.W. Page. Also wants location of the Henry Archer Perdieu and the Peter Doss cemeteries.

The April 26 issue of The Richmond Times-Dispatch featured a nice sports story about Appomattox native, Brad Babcock, long time baseball coach at James Madison University, Harrisonburg. Take a bow.

And congratulations to the fine Town of Brookneal. The new Mayor, unopposed, is Mrs. Carolyn Moses Lusardi, daughter of the late Senator and Mrs. Charles T. Moses, Sr. She is one of Appomattox's most successful natives and we are proud. Take a bow.

Thanks for reading and see ya around.

Enroute to Maine

Wayfarer visits county

Dale Curry's lifelong dream of walking across the United States is becoming a reality. The 45 year old former deputy sheriff from Santa Barbara, California took of his excursion on Friday, March 13, 1981 after quitting his job as law enforcement officer.

Curry who holds a Masters Degree in Public Administrstion and a BA Degree in History from the University of Southern California, has pushed his cart over what he believes is his roughest route from California to Van Buren, Maine.

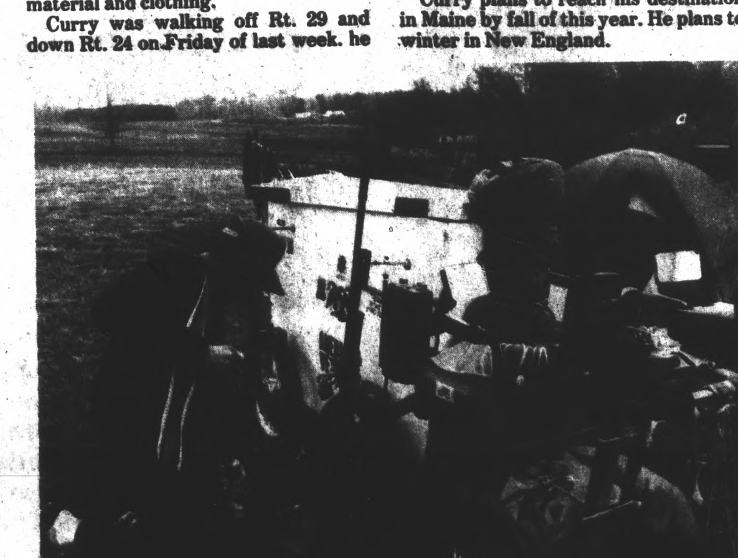
To reach Virginia he has traveled 900 miles of desert, Death Valley, the Grand Canyon, 18 states, and nearly every mountain range in the country.

Curry gave a lot of thought to the trip before taking off. He realized just what it would entail and felt he wasn't ready for such an experience until now.

On his cart, resembling an ice cream cart, Curry carries everything he needs on the trip, food, a tent, a spare tire, a jack, an air pump, reading material and clothing.

Curry was walking off Rt. 29 and down Rt. 24 on Friday of last week. he pitched his tent behind the Village Market in Concord and spent the night there. On Saturday he visited Appomattox, spending time at the Appomattox Court House Historic Park. He was back on the road again on Sunday morning.

Curry plans to reach his destination in Maine by fall of this year. He plans to winter in New England.



DALE CURRY, ON HIS WALK across the United States takes time out in Concord last week to repair a wheel on his cart. Curry has been walking since March of '81 and hopes to complete his walk by fall of this year. (Photo by Jeff Spitzer)

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